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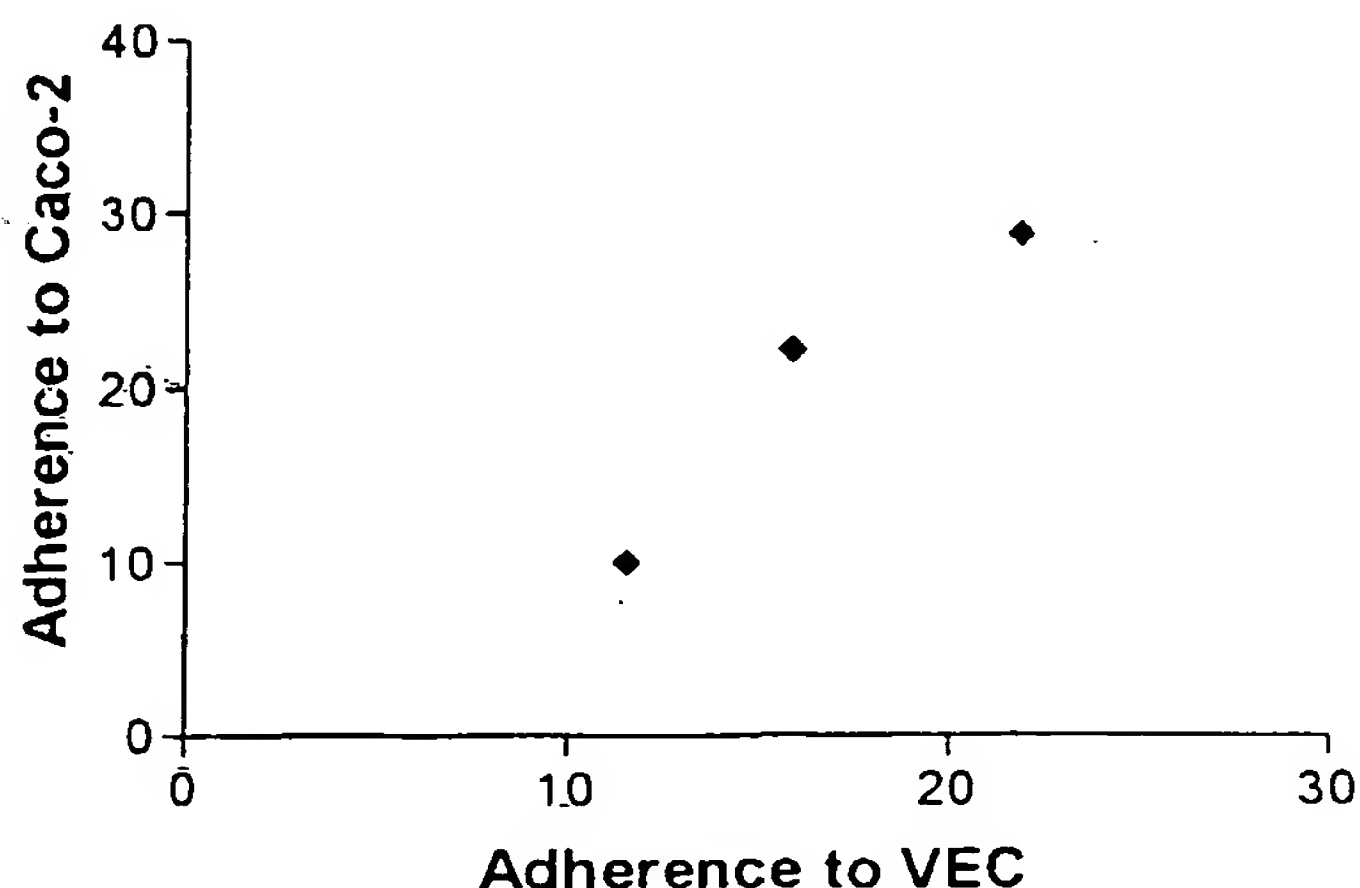
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(54) Title: LACTOBACILLUS STRAINS

Correlation between adherence to vaginal epithelial cells and Caco-2 cells



(57) Abstract: Novel Lactobacilli strains, Lactobacillus acidophilus strain Lba EB01 (Lba EB01), Lactobacillus paracasei strain Lbp PB01 (Lbp PB01), Lactobacillus acidophilus strain Lba EB02, Lactobacillus plantarum strain Lbpl PB02, Lactobacillus strain Lbxx EB03 and Lactobacillus strain Lbxx PB03, and strains with essentially the same advantageous properties which alone or in combination can be used as probiotics or together with a prebiotic as a synbiotic. The invention also relates to pharmaceutical compositions, dairy products, functional foods, nutraceutical and products for personal care comprising the strains alone or in combination, as well as use of the strain for prevention or treatment of vaginal infections, urogenital infections and gastrointestinal diseases.

Lactobacillus strains

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to novel *Lactobacilli* strains, which alone or in
5 combination can be used as probiotics or together with a prebiotic as a synbiotic.
The invention also relates to pharmaceutical compositions, dairy products, functional
foods, nutraceutical and products for personal care comprising the strains alone or
in combination, as well as use of the strain for prevention or treatment of vaginal
infections, urogenital infections and gastrointestinal diseases.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Probiotics are live microorganisms or microbial mixtures administered to improve the
the patient's microbial balance, particularly the environment of the gastrointestinal
tract and the vagina. *Lactobacilli* strains have been employed for the treatment of
15 vaginal infections, prevention of diarrhoea as well as for the treatment of urinary-
tract infections (Am. J. Health Syst. Pharm. 2001, **58** (12): p 1101-1109).

The normal vaginal flora is dominated by *Lactobacillus* species, which produce
substances that help control the growth of pathogens. Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is a
20 clinical condition that is characterized by a decrease of the *Lactobacillus* species
and an increased growth of anaerobic and mycoplasma bacteria. Bacterial vaginosis
has been associated with the development of pelvic inflammatory disease and
preterm labour. Some studies have suggested that patients with bacterial vaginosis
may have an increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs),
25 including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection (Curr Infect Dis Rep 2001
Apr;3 (2) 152-155; J Infect Dis 2002 Jan 1; 185(1):69-73).

By administering probiotic *Lactobacilli*, it is possible to regenerate the vaginal flora of
women with recurrent episodes of bacterial vaginosis. Bacterial vaginosis is one of
30 the most common female gynaecological problems.

Vaginal infection caused by *Candida albicans* is also a common female
gynaecological problem.

The presence of *Lactobacilli* is important for the maintenance of the intestinal microbial ecosystem. *Lactobacilli* have been shown to possess inhibitory activity toward the growth of pathogenic bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella spp* and others. This inhibition could be due to the production of inhibitory compounds such as organic acids, hydrogen peroxide, bacteriocins or reuterin or to competitive adhesion to the epithelium (App. Environ. Microbiol., 1999, **65** (11) p 4949-4956).

Lactobacilli have also been examined as a treatment of urinary-tract infections. (Am. J. Health Syst. Pharm. 2001, **58** (12): p 1101-1109). For example the installation of *Lactobacillus*, and stimulation of indigenous organisms, has been employed to prevent recurrence of urinary tract infections (Microecol. Ther. :32-45). The role of *Lactobacilli* in preventing urogenital and intestinal infections has also been investigated (Intl. Dairy J 1998. 8:555-562).

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

The importance of *Lactobacilli* as probiotics has been described in the literature.

Jacobsen et al, Applied and Environmental Microbiology, (1999) 65, 4949-4956 discloses the screening of probiotic activities of forty-seven strains of *Lactobacillus* spp. by *in vitro* techniques and evaluation of the colonization ability of five selected strains in humans. The strains were examined for resistance to pH 2.5 and 0.3% oxgall, adhesion to Caco-2 cells and antimicrobial activities against enteric pathogenic bacteria. The average number of adhering *Lactobacilli* in 20 microscopic fields for example was 630 ± 275 for L. Rhamnosus LGG and 713 ± 188 for L. Rhamnosus 19070-2.

US 5,032,399 discloses therapeutically beneficial strains of *L. acidophilus* and especially a strain characterized in that an average of at least 50 bacteria were found to adhere to one human small intestinal mucosal cell after a five minute incubation of the bacteria with the cell. The strain was also characterized with respect to lactic acid production and hardy growth.

WO 99/45099 discloses a novel strain of *L. plantarum* LB 931. This strain can be used for treating or preventing urogenital infections. The strain was able to adhere well to vaginal epithelial cells as well as to inhibit or prevent growth of different bacterial strains.

5

US 5,645,830 relates to *Lactobacillus*, skim milk, *Lactobacillus* Growth Factor (LGF) and *Lactobacillus* compositions and methods of employing the compositions for preventing urogenital infections. More particularly, this invention relates to the ability of strains of hydrophobic or hydrophilic *Lactobacillus* to adhere to biomaterials, and intestinal, vaginal and uroepithelial cells, to resist the action of certain antimicrobial agents and to dominate the urogenital flora. In the case of *L. casei* var. *rharnosus* GR-1, it was found that an average of at least 64 bacteria could adhere to one uroepithelial cell, whereas for *L. fermentum* B-54 an average of at least 39 bacteria could adhere to one uroepithelial cell.

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US 6,093,394 (WO 98/46261) discloses novel strains, e.g. *L. crispatus* CTV-05, isolated from vaginal smears. The strain is characterised by an increased ability to adhere to vaginal epithelial cells and to produce hydrogen peroxide. The *L. crispatus* CTV-05 was found to have a percent vaginal epithelial cell (VEC) cohesion value of greater than 50%. The "percent VEC cohesion value" is defined as the percentage of VECs to which at least one *Lactobacillus* cell has adhered in the total number of VECs in an identified group. The ability of these strains to recolonize is ascribed to a novel preservation matrix disclosed in the document.

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EP0956858 discloses the use of different *Lactobacillus* strains alone or in combination. The strains were selected based on their ability to adhere to HeLa cells and to produce hydrogen peroxide.

30

WO 97/29762 discloses compositions comprising an effective amount of at least one plant species of the *Ericaceae* family or its extract and a culture of at least one species of microencapsulated bacteria selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium* and mixtures thereof. The composition is useful in preventing and/or treating urogenital and intestinal disorders.

In Ocaña *et al*, Biocell (2001) 25(3), 265-273 the capability of *Lactobacilli* to adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC) was studied. The *Lactobacilli*, *L. crispatus* CRL 1266, *L. salivarius* subsp. *salivarius* CRL 1328, *L. acidophilus* CRL 1259, *L. acidophilus* CRL 1294 were isolated from human vaginal smears.

In McLean, N.W. *et al*, J. Med. Microbiol., 2000, 49 (6) pp 543-552 different *Lactobacilli* were characterised in order to assess their potential use as probiotics by investigating their capability to adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC). The *Lactobacilli* were isolated from human vaginal smears.

Pharmaceutical compositions of *Lactobacilli* known in the art are not sufficiently efficient in recolonizing *in vivo*, i.e. in mammalian microbial ecosystems and there is therefore a need for finding *Lactobacilli* with an inherent ability to recolonize upon administering the *Lactobacilli* in the form of a pharmaceutical composition, a nutraceutical, a dairy product, a functional food or absorbent product. *Lactobacilli* isolated from human sources will have the best ability to recolonize *in vivo* upon administration because of their inherent ability to survive in the humane microbial ecosystem. It is often a cumbersome process to identify *Lactobacilli* strains with enhanced abilities to recolonize upon administration and it is therefore important to select the best test systems to predict their *in vivo* ability to recolonize.

The capability of *Lactobacilli* to adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC), cultured Caco-2 cells or other cell lines has been found to be an important factor and serve as a means to assess the ability of a probiotics strain to recolonize and participate in the formation of a barrier to prevent colonization of pathogenic bacteria.

In the literature there seems to be a large variation in the reported *in vitro* adherence of probiotic strains. This variation indeed reflects biological differences between strains, but certainly also depends on experimental conditions. Moreover, there also seems to be variation with regard to how to measure the adherence. In US 6,093,394 the adherence of *Lactobacilli* is determined by calculating the percent vaginal epithelial cell (VEC) cohesion value. The "percent VEC cohesion value" is defined as the percentage of VEC's, where at least one *Lactobacillus* cell is adhered in the total number of VECs in an identified group. Another measure of *in vitro*

adherence is to count the average number of adhered microbial cells to a pre-defined number of epithelial cells in a stained preparation. According to the inventors the first method is better than the latter, inasmuch as it more closely reflects the *in vivo* adherence. It may be argued that an *in vitro* experiment only serves as a means to estimate the *in vivo* ability to colonize by adherence to epithelial cells of for example the vagina. The way the adherence is calculated is therefore not necessarily the most important factor, but rather it is very important to compare potential probiotic strains with a well-characterised probiotic bacterial strain that is known to adhere to a mucosal membrane. US 5,032,399 discloses a *Lactobacilli* strain characterized in that an average of at least 50 of the bacteria can adhere to one human small intestinal mucosal cell, however the *Lactobacilli* strain is not compared to a well-characterised probiotic bacteria. *Lactobacillus casei* GG is an example of a commercially available, well-characterised probiotic strain that is relevant to use for comparison in the search for efficient probiotic strains.

Besides studying the adhesiveness of the *Lactobacilli* to exfoliated vaginal epithelial cells (VEC), cultured Caco-2 cells or other types of cell lines, it is also important to characterise the *in vitro* inhibitory activity of the *Lactobacilli* against bacterial species, e.g. anaerobic and mycoplasmal bacteria involved in bacterial vaginosis, acid production after growth of the *Lactobacilli* in liquid culture, and production of hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2). It is important to measure the hydrogen peroxide production, because *in vivo* hydrogen peroxide will assist in eradicating non-hydrogen peroxide producing bacteria and mycoplasmal bacteria.

In summary, *Lactobacilli* strains with probiotic capabilities should be able to adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC), and other suitable cells, such as the cell line Caco-2 cells. Moreover, it is also desirable that the *Lactobacilli* strains with probiotic capabilities show *in vitro* inhibitory activity against other bacterial species, produce acid after growth in liquid culture and/or produce hydrogen peroxide.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide pharmaceutical formulations or absorbent products of suitable probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains with the desired properties as discussed above. More particularly the present invention concerns the

Lactobacillus acidophilus strain Lba EB01 (EB01), *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01 (PB01) *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02 (EB02), *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02 (PB02), *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 (EB03) and *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 (PB03), and strains with essential the same
5 advantageous properties e.g. the ability to colonize by adherence to mucosal membranes and which are therefore suited for the treatment or prevention of vaginal infections, urinary-tract infections and gastrointestinal diseases.

Another object of the present invention is to provide pharmaceutical formulations
10 with an increased ability to colonise by adherence to the mucosal membrane by employing mucous adhesive excipients.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide vaginal formulations with an increased ability to suppress the growth of *Candida albicans* and Gram negative
15 pathogenic bacteria.

It is yet another objective of the present invention to provide dairy products, nutraceutical products and functional food comprising one or more probiotic
20 *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01, *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 or strains with essentially the same properties having the ability to colonise mucosal membranes, and therefore adapted to the treatment or prevention of vaginal infections, urinary-tract infections and gastrointestinal diseases .

FIGURES

Fig. 1 Adherence of *Lactobacilli acidophilus* strain EB01, *Lactobacilli paracasei* strain PB01 and *Lactobacillus casei* GG to cultured Caco-2 cells. The number of bound bacteria was calculated and is presented as mean percent adherence \pm SD.

Fig. 2 Adherence of *Lactobacilli acidophilus* strain EB01, *Lactobacilli paracasei* strain PB01 and *Lactobacillus casei* GG to isolated vaginal epithelial cells. The number of bound bacteria was calculated and is presented as the number of bound bacteria per VEC cells \pm SD.

Fig. 3 Correlation between adherence to VEC and Caco-2 cells. The figure is based on data in fig. 1 and fig. 2

DEFINITIONS

By "excipient" is meant any non-active ingredient that is added to form part of the final formulation.

By "probiotic" is meant a viable microbial supplement, which has a beneficial influence on the patient through its effects in the intestinal tract, urinary tract or the vaginal tract.

A "prebiotic" is used herein as a substrate, which has a beneficial effect on a probiotic and thus on the individual patient taking the probiotic.

A "patient" is used herein as a person suffering from any clinical condition related to a microbial imbalance as well as a person using bacterial preparations prophylactically.

By a synbiotic product is meant a combination of probiotic and prebiotic, which in synergy, have a beneficial influence on the patient.

By "hardy growth" is meant that bacteria show excellent growth.

The abbreviation "cfu" means "colony-forming unit".

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

- 5 The present invention relating to probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains capable of regenerating the *in vivo* flora in humans will become apparent in the progress of the following detailed description.

According to a first aspect, the present invention comprises *Lactobacillus*
10 *acidophilus* strain Lba EB01, *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 as well as probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains with essentially the same properties.

- 15 Particular examples of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01 have been deposited at the DSMZ – Deutsche Sammlung Von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH, Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany and given the following accession numbers: *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01; DSM 14869 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp
20 PB01; DSM 14870. The date of the deposit of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain EB01 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain PB01 was 18 March 2002.

- Particular examples of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 and
25 *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 have been deposited at the DSMZ – Deutsche Sammlung Von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH, Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124, Germany. The date of the deposit of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 was 20 March 2003. The strains were given the
30 following accession numbers:

Lactobacillus acidophilus strain Lba EB02, ...
Lactobacillus plantarum strain Lbpl PB02, ...
Lactobacillus strain Lbxx EB03 ...

Lactobacillus strain Lbxx PB03 ...

The *Lactobacilli* strains have the following properties;

5 *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01

At least 20 % of added bacteria adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The adherence to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC) is at least 15 bacteria per cell.

The strain produces hydrogen peroxide.

10 The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and shows hardy growth *in vitro*.

The strain shows bile stability.

The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of a bacteriocin.

15 *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01

At least 30 % of added bacteria adhered to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The adherence to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC) is 20 bacteria per cell.

The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and hardy growth *in vitro*.

20 The strain shows bile stability.

The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of bacteriocins.

The strain demonstrates strong inhibitory activity against *Gardnerella*.

25 *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02

The bacteria adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The bacteria adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC).

The strain produces hydrogen peroxide.

The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and shows hardy growth *in vitro*.

30 The strain shows bile stability.

The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of bacteriocins.

Lactobacillus plantarum strain Lbpl PB02

The bacteria adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The bacteria adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC).

The strain produces hydrogen peroxide.

5 The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and shows hardy growth *in vitro*.

The strain shows bile stability.

The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of a bacteriocin

10 Lactobacillus strain Lbxx EB03

At least 12 % of added bacteria adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The bacteria adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC).

The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and shows hardy growth *in vitro*.

15 The strain shows bile stability.

The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of bacteriocins.

Lactobacillus strain Lbxx PB03

20 At least 11 % of added bacteria adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

The bacteria adhere to vaginal epithelial cells (VEC).

The strain produces lactic acid *in vitro* and shows hardy growth *in vitro*.

The strain shows bile stability.

25 The strain shows acid stability.

The strain produces a natural antibiotic substance in the form of bacteriocins.

30 By "probiotic *Lactobacillus* strain with essential the same properties" is meant any strain, which has the same adherence properties as listed above for *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01, *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp strain PB01, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx PB03, preferably for *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01, *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp strain PB01, *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx PB03 and more

preferably *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp strain PB01.

5 In order to determine the genus and species of the strains disclosed herein the Riboprinter© Microbial Characterization system was employed. The amount and composition of the strains were identified and determined by Gaschromatografi. Moreover, an API identification of the strains was also carried out.

10 The adherence properties of the isolated strains were compared to the well-characterised probiotic strain *Lactobacillus casei* GG. Almost 30 % of the added *Lactobacillus paracasei* PB01 strain bacteria adhered to the cultured Caco-2 cells during a 1 hour incubation period, compared to about 20 % of the *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain EB01 and about 10 % of *Lactobacillus GG*. *Lactobacillus paracasei* Strain PB01 adheres most strongly to the VEC with approximately 20 bacteria per
15 cell after a 1-hour incubation. *Lactobacillus GG* has the lowest number of adhered bacteria, while strain EB01 has intermediate values. The adhesion of these three bacterial strains to the cultured Caco-2 correlated well to the adhesion to the VEC.

20 *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02 and *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02 was found to adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period. At least 12 % of added *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 adhere to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period, whereas at least 11 % of added *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 adheres to cultured Caco-2 cells during a one-hour incubation period.

25 Thus, all the strains were able to adhere to Caco- 2 cells . Strain EB03 and PB03 had better adherence properties than *Lactobacillus casei* GG.

30 The strains were found to produce lactic acid *in vitro* and show hardy growth *in vitro* as well as show stability toward acid and bile, moreover both strains were able to produce natural antibiotic substance, bacteriocin

Strain EB02 and PB02 showed a very strong ability to produce H₂O₂ and lactic acid

Lactobacillus paracasei, strain PB01 has demonstrated a strong inhibitory activity against the BV-associated bacterial species *Gardnerella vaginalis*. Strain EB01 produces H₂O₂. A combination of these two strains is very suitable for a vaginal probiotic product due to their supplementary effects. This is further supported by the finding that both isolates produced a highly acidic environment after growth in liquid medium and both strongly adhere to VEC and to cultured Caco-2 cells. The result also indicates that *Lactobacillus paracasei*, strain Lbp PB01 or Strain EB01 alone, in combination or together with *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 are suitable for other administration routes.

According to a second aspect, the *Lactobacillus* strains of the present invention are suitable for medical use in preventing or treating vaginal infections, urogenital infections or gastrointestinal infections.

In a preferred embodiment, the curative effect of the probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains for treating vaginal infections is assessed by determining the vaginal flora by employing the Riboprinter® Microbial Characterization system. The Riboprinter® Microbial Characterization system is employed for determining the genus and species of microorganism. The patient is assessed as being cured when the vaginal flora is determined as being normal using the Riboprinter® Microbial Characterization system.

In another preferred embodiment, a pharmaceutical composition is provided comprising one or more probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains used according to the invention together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier and/or diluent. The bacterial strains are formulated into pharmaceutical formulations in order to allow the easy administration of the probiotic strains and by means known to the man skilled in the art.

Preferably, the probiotic bacteria employed in a pharmaceutical composition in accordance with the present invention are used in bacterial concentrations of 10⁵ to 10¹³ cfu *Lactobacillus* per gram, more preferably 10⁶ to 10¹² cfu *Lactobacillus* per

gram, where the abbreviation "cfu" means "colony-forming unit". This may be one of the strains or a combination thereof.

Preferably, the probiotic bacteria employed in accordance with the present invention
5 is used directly, or more preferably in a lyophilized form.

For practical use the pharmaceutical compositions of the invention are prepared in the form of a suspension, spray, gel, cream, powder, capsule, solution for lavages, ovules, a vaginal insert, tablets or a microencapsulated product employing
10 excipients and formulation techniques known to those skilled in the art.

In order to increase the ability of a pharmaceutical formulation to adhere to a mucosal membrane, mucous adhesive excipients may be added to comprise up to about 10 % of the pharmaceutical formulation. The preferred mucous adhesive
15 excipient is a hydrocolloid, more preferably the hydrocolloid is selected from the group comprising xanthan gum, locust bean gum alginate and most preferably the hydrocolloid is xanthan gum.

Candida albicans are not able to ferment lactitol, this may also be the case for *E. coli* or other Gram negative bacteria. Therefore, a prebiotic substrate which is not
20 fermented by *Candida albicans* or by pathogenic bacteria is employed in vaginal formulations comprising the probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains used according to the present invention in order to suppress the growth of *Candida albicans*. The prebiotic substrate is preferably an oligosaccharide, more preferably the substrate is lactitol,
25 oligofructose or lactulose, most preferably the substrate is lactitol.

In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, an absorbent product is provided comprising one or more probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains. The bacterial strains are incorporated into absorbent products in order to allow the convenient
30 administration of the probiotic strains during use of the absorbent product.

For practical use the absorbent product of the present invention is a feminine hygiene diaper, sanitary napkin, impregnated tampon, panty guard or an incontinence guard comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains. Preferably, the

probiotic bacteria employed in the absorbent product are used in bacterial concentrations of 10^5 to 10^{13} cfu *Lactobacillus*, more preferably 10^6 to 10^{12} cfu *Lactobacillus*.

- 5 In a preferred embodiment of the present invention dairy products are provided comprising one or more probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains, the bacterial strains are incorporated into dairy products which allow oral administration of the probiotic strains for treating or preventing gastrointestinal diseases. Non-limiting examples of a dairy product is mild yoghurt, which is especially suitable together with all the new
10 probiotic strains (fermented milk), curdled milk and whole milk.

- In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, nutraceutical products are provided comprising one or more probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains, the bacterial strains are incorporated into nutraceutical products for allowing oral administration of the
15 probiotic strains for treating or preventing gastrointestinal diseases. Non-limiting examples of nutraceutical products are products used to supplement the diet and with a positive effect on the health.

- In yet another preferred embodiment of the present invention functional food is
20 provided comprising one or more probiotic *Lactobacillus* strains, the bacterial strains are incorporated into functional food allowing oral administration of the probiotic strains for treating or preventing gastrointestinal diseases. Non-limiting examples of functional food products are freeze dried and microencapsulated products for easy spread on food products.

- 25 In a further preferred embodiment of the present invention, the *Lactobacillus* strains are used for preparing pharmaceutical compositions for preventing and/or treating vaginal infections, gastrointestinal diseases or urinary-tract infections.

- 30 In yet a further preferred embodiment of the present invention, the *Lactobacillus* strains are used for producing an absorbent product, such as a feminine hygiene diaper, sanitary napkin, panty guard or an incontinence guard for preventing and/or treating vaginal infections, gastrointestinal diseases or urinary-tract infections.

In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the *Lactobacillus* strains are used for preparing dairy products for preventing and/or treating gastrointestinal diseases.

- 5 In yet another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the *Lactobacillus* strains are used for preparing functional foods for preventing and/or treating gastrointestinal diseases.

10 In a further preferred embodiment of the present invention the *Lactobacillus* strains are used for preparing nutraceuticals for preventing gastrointestinal diseases.

The treatment schedule of these different products will depend on the product in question and the patient, which are known to those skilled in the art. A non-limiting example of a treatment schedule for vaginal capsules is one vaginal capsule twice a
15 day for seven days.

In order to give the bacteria optimum growth conditions initially and thus enabling the bacteria to recolonize by adherence *in vivo*, it is important to incorporate a substrate, i.e. a specific nutritional growth medium for the bacteria, into the
20 formulation. The substrate will serve as a functional prebiotic, which together with the probiotic has a synergistically beneficial effect on the patient, i.e., the prebiotic and the probiotic acts as a symbiotic. Lactose is an example of such a substrate; however lactose also serves as a substrate for the pathogen *Candida albicans* and Gram negative pathogenic bacteria. It may therefore be relevant to provide a
25 bacterial formulation with a substrate, which is not a substrate for *Candida albicans*. In a third aspect of the invention, there is therefore provided vaginal formulations comprising bacterial strains with the ability to colonize the vagina and a substrate, which is not fermented by *Candida albicans*. Preferably the substrate is an oligosaccharide, more preferably the substrate is lactitol, oligofructose and/or
30 lactulose, most preferably the substrate is lactitol.

The effect of lactitol on the in vitro adherence of Lactobacillus acidophilus strain Lba EB01 and Lactobacillus paracasei strain Lbp PB01 to the HEp-2 cell line and the WEHI cell line was studied. It was found that the lactitol does not affect the overall

ability of the bacterial strains to adhere to the cells and will thus neither affect the *in vivo* adherence.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention a substrate, which is not or not easily fermented by *Candida albicans* or by Gram negative pathogenic bacteria is used in the preparation of a vaginal formulation comprising bacteria in order to suppress the growth of *Candida albicans*, the substrate is preferably an oligosaccharid, more preferably the substrate is lactitol, oligofructose and/or lactulose and most preferably the substrate is lactitol.

In yet a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the bacterial strains in the form of e.g. capsules are use as medical devices in order to obtain a stable mammalian microbial ecosystem *in vivo*.

EXAMPLES

Example 1

Isolation of bacterial strains

Two *Lactobacillus* strains, typed as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp PB01, were isolated from vaginal epithelial cells obtained from healthy human donors, and have been deposited at DSMZ. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 was given the following accession number; DSM 14869 and *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp PB01 was given the following accession number; DSM 14870. The date of deposit was 18 March 2002

Four *Lactobacillus* strains, typed as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03, were isolated from vaginal epithelial cells obtained from healthy human donors, and have been deposited at DSMZ. The date of deposit was 20 March 2003.

Lactobacillus casei GG, a commercially available probiotic, was obtained from Valio (Finland). These strains were cultured anaerobically in Man, Rogosa and Sharpe broth (Merck) at 37°C.

- 5 For radio labeling, 40 µl ³H-adenine was added to 20 ml broth and incubated for 16 - 18 hours, and excess radiolabel was removed by washing and centrifugation of the bacteria the twice. Bacteria used in the VEC-assay were not radiolabelled, but otherwise handled as described above. Optical density at 600 nm of bacterial cultures was used to adjust bacterial concentrations as indicated elsewhere.

10

Example 2

Adherence of probiotic strains to VEC

By this test the adherence of probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains to VEC was investigated.

- 15 VEC were harvested, during gynecological investigation, into sterile phosphate buffer saline (PBS) pH 7.2. After about 20 hours, gentamicin and fetal bovine serum was added to the cells. Final concentrations were 100 µg/ml gentamicin and 2 % serum. The cells were then stored for another 24 hours at 4°C. Prior to the adherence assay, the cells were washed twice using PBS-buffer with 2 % serum.

20

The washed probiotic strains were suspended in 10 mM lactate and 150 mM NaCl pH 4.5 buffer and the optical density was adjusted to $1,00 \pm 0,03$. The bacterial suspension was mixed 1:1 with VEC-suspension and incubated for 2 hours at 37 °C. After incubation the cells were washed 4 times using PBS-buffer with 2 % fetal

25 bovine serum and finally washed once using plain PBS. After the last centrifugation, the cell pellet was suspended in a few µl of the buffer and transferred to microscope slides. The cells were then dried at 90°C. The dried spot was fixed with methanol and stained with 0.1 % crystal violet. The stained preparation was studied using a light microscope with oil immersion at 100 x. The number of bacteria was counted

30 on 30-70 randomly chosen cells/donor.

The results presented in fig. 2 shows the adherence of the three strains to VEC. The values are the mean \pm SD from 5 donors. Strain PB01 adheres most strongly

with approximately 20 bacteria per cell after 1-hour incubation. *Lactobacillus* GG has the lowest number of adhered bacteria, while strain EB01 has intermediate values.

Example 3

5 Adherence of probiotic strains to Caco-2 cell cultures

By this test the adherence of probiotic *Lactobacilli* strains to Caco-2 was investigated.

10 The Caco-2 cell line (CRL-2102, ATCC, USA) was cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (Sigma-Aldrich) with 4 mM L-glutamine adjusted to contain 4.5 g/L glucose, 1.5 g/L sodium bicarbonate, 1.0 mM sodium pyruvate (Sigma-Aldrich), 10 % fetal calf serum(FBS) (Merck) and 1 % penicillin/streptomycin (Merck) at 37° C in an atmosphere of 5 % CO₂/95 % air. For adherence assays, Caco-2 cells were
15 seeded at a concentration of 1.5×10^5 in 96-well microtiter plates. The cell cultures were maintained for 2 weeks prior to use. The cell culture medium was changed every other day, and it was changed 2 hours before the adherence assay.

The adherence of bacterial strains to Caco-2 cell cultures was examined by adding
20 200 µl of radio labelled bacterial suspension to the wells. Before adding the bacteria, the wells were washed twice with MEM-Eagle (Sigma-Aldrich) supplemented with 0.5 % FBS, 1 % L-glutamine and 0.1 % non-essential amino acids. After incubation for 1 hour, the cell cultures were washed 4 times with 250 µl buffered saline solution in a Multiwash Plus AR (Labsystems) and treated with 150 µl of 2 % SDS in 0.01 M
25 NaOH for 20 minutes to lyse the bacteria, which were measured by liquid scintillation counting. The adherence ratio (%) was calculated by comparing the radioactivity with the original bacterial suspension.

The data presented in fig. 1 shows the adherence of the three probiotic strains to
30 cultured Caco-2 cells.

Almost 30 % of the added *Lactobacillus paracasei* Lbp PB01 strain bacteria adhered to the cultured cells during the 1 hour incubation period, in comparison to about 20 % of the *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 and about 10 % of *Lactobacillus* GG.

Example 4

Correlation of adherence to cultered Caco-2 cells compared to VEC.

As shown in fig. 3 there is a good correlation between adherence to cultured Caco-2 cells and to VEC.

5

Example 5

Composition for vaginal capsules

10	Ingredients:	mg/capsule:
	Lactitol	328,00
	Glucose	20,00
	Xanthan gum	25,00
15	<i>Lactobacillus acidophilus</i> Lba EB01	12,50
	<i>Lactobacillus paracasei</i> Lbp PB01	12,50
	Magnesium stearate	2,00

20 The freeze-dried lactic acid culture was kept free from foreign contamination until use. A nutritive growth medium consisting of anhydrous glucose, anhydrous lactitol and xanthan gum was found to be optimal for the lactic bacteria. Magnesium stearate is a hydrophobic anti-adhesion lubricant to ensure powder flow during filling into capsules.

25 All the excipients were sieved employing a Frewitt sieve, and mixed employing a Cubus mixer. The homogenous powder was then filled into capsules.

All processes are performed according to general pharmaceutical practise.

30 The raw material culture, the excipients and the finished product are controlled thoroughly by using validated analytical methods for identification, purity, contamination and assay.

Example 6

Composition for chewable tablets

	Ingredients:	mg/tablet :
5		
	Lactitol	330.50
	Xylitol	90.00
	Mandarin aroma	3.50
	Lactic acid	9.00
10	Dual coated <i>Lactobacillus</i> Lbp <i>paracasei</i>	6.25
	Dual coated <i>Lactobacillus</i> Lba <i>Acidophilus</i>	6.25
	Magnesium stearate	4.50

15 The freeze-dried lactic acid culture is kept free from foreign contamination until use.
The nutritive growth medium, lactitol, was found to be optimal for the lactic bacteria.

Magnesium stearate is a hydrophobic anti-adhesion lubricant to ensure powder flow
during tablet compression. Mandarin aroma powder and lactic acid powder is added
20 for flavour.

All the excipients were sieved employing a Frewitt sieve and mixed employing a
Cubus mixer. The homogenous powder was then made into tablets with a tablet
weight of 450 mg.

25 All processes are performed according to general pharmaceutical practise.

The raw material culture, the excipients and the finished product are controlled
thoroughly by using validated analytical methods for identification, purity,
30 contamination and assay.

Example 7

Composition for a dairy product**Preparation of probiotic *Lactobacilli acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 and yoghurt cultures:**

The skimmed milk is pasteurised at extra high temperatures, approx. 98°C for at least 3 minutes. Powdered skimmed milk or powdered whey can be supplied during this process in order to raise the dry matter percentage.

- 10 The high-pasteurised skimmed milk is then fat and protein standardized to final percentage of fat of 3.5-4.0 %, and of protein of 3.8-4.0%.

The standardized milk is then homogenized at a temperature of 60-70°C and at a pressure of 200-220 bar (20-22 Mpa).

- 15 The standardized and homogenized milk is then pasteurized at 90-98 °C for 3-5 minutes.

The milk is then cooled and pumped into a fermenter for incubation at a constant fermenting temperature at 35-40°C throughout the fermenting process.

- 20 Yoghurt sole starter culture, as well as the sole starter Probiotic *Lactobacilli* strain Lba EB01 are poured directly into the milk while stirring powerfully. The fermenting cultures 'the sole starters' are supplied from e.g. frozen cultures (pellets stored at – 40°C before use) and directly filled into the fermenter.

- 25 The fermenting process is ongoing until the pH level is: 4.6-4.4.

Then the yoghurt is stirred and cooled to 20-25°C.

- 30 The yoghurt is then cooled down to approx. 20-24°C and pumped directly into a buffer tank, where it is kept at 20°C until filling into the final packaging material (with or without fruit jam), and stored cold at 2-5 ° C.

Example 8

Vaginal capsules pilot study

5

Clinical test: Effect and level of patient satisfaction.

The goals of the pilot study:

10 1. To examine the clinical effect of Vaginal capsules in women diagnosed with Bacterial Vaginosis (BV).

2. To examine whether the vaginal capsules are patient-oriented.

The group of patients:

15 21 women diagnosed with BV.

The doctor diagnosed BV according to the following criteria:

Women with a malodorous vaginal discharge

- 20
- Excess grey and whitish discharge
 - pH higher than 4,5
 - Positive odour test

Dosage form

25 Vaginal capsules prepared according example 5 contains human lactic acid bacteria (Lba EB01 and Lbp PB01).

Treatment:

30 After having been diagnosed the women were treated one week with Vaginal capsules.

2 – 3 weeks after the treatment the women were clinically by examined and then asked to fill out a "patient" questionnaire.

Study place:

35 The study was carried out at the gynaecological clinic in Drammen (Norway).

Result:

All patients suffered from malodorous vaginal discharge, in addition 12 suffered from excess discharge, 5 suffered from minor bleeding while 3 mentioned discomfort from itchiness.

5 2/3 of the patients had suffered for several years.

13 (62%) had tried self-medication: 8 with Canesten against fungus, 3 with lactic acid suppositories, 1 with antibiotic treatment.

12 of the patients had consulted their doctor, and 50% were given fungicide, 25% Dalacin against BV, while 25% did not receive any treatment at all.

10

90% of the women (19 out of 21) found that the symptoms disappeared during the treatment and most of them within a few days:

within 2 days: 6 women

15 within 5 days: 9 women

within 8 days: 4 women

One woman found the vaginal capsules hard to apply while the remaining 20 women were very pleased. All women with the exception of one (1 of the 2 who did not find the treatment effective) wanted to try vaginal capsules again in case of recurrence. No side effects were reported.

20

Conclusion:

Vaginal capsules containing bacterial strains according to the invention seem to have a positive clinical effect on women suffering from the symptoms connected with BV and 9 out of 10 were cured.

25

Most of the patients had tried self-medication and consulted their doctor. Most of them had tried fungicides to relieve the discomfort.

30 The vaginal capsules were considered very user-friendly.

Example 9

In order to test the *in vivo* effect in women of lactitol in a prebiotic formulation according to the invention different vaginal formulations were manufactured

5 Composition for vaginal capsules (with lactitol)

	Ingredients:	mg/capsule:
	Lactitol	328.0
	Glucose	20.0
10	Xanthan gum	25.0
	<i>Lactobacillus acidophilus</i> Lba EB01	12.5
	<i>Lactobacillus paracasei</i> Lbp PB01	12.5
	Magnesium stearate	2.0

15 Composition for vaginal capsules (with lactose)

	Ingredients:	mg/capsule:
	Lactose	328.0
	Glucose	20.0
20	Xanthan gum	25.0
	<i>Lactobacillus acidophilus</i> Lba EB01	12.5
	<i>Lactobacillus paracasei</i> Lbp PB01	12.5
	Magnesium stearate	2.0

25 Composition for vaginal capsules (without bacterial strains)

	Ingredients:	mg/capsule:
	Lactitol	353.0
	Glucose	20.0
30	Xanthan gum	25.0
	Magnesium stearate	2.0

Vaginal capsules containing bacterial strains and lactitol are preferred dosage forms for treating women with gynaecological problems.

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25

Example 10

Riboprint of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 (=1702 BBB *Lactobacillus acidophilus*) and *Lactobacillus Paracasei* Lbp PB01 (=1704 BBB *Lactobacillus Paracasei*).

Label/ Presumptive ID

Lactobacillus paracasei ss. *paracasei* <Unlabeled> <none>

Lactobacillus paracasei ss. *paracasei* <Unlabeled> <none>

1704 BBB *Lactobacillus paracasei*

Lactobacillus rhamnosus <Unlabeled> <none>

Lactobacillus rhamnosus <Unlabeled> <none>

Lactobacillus acidophilus <Unlabeled> <none>

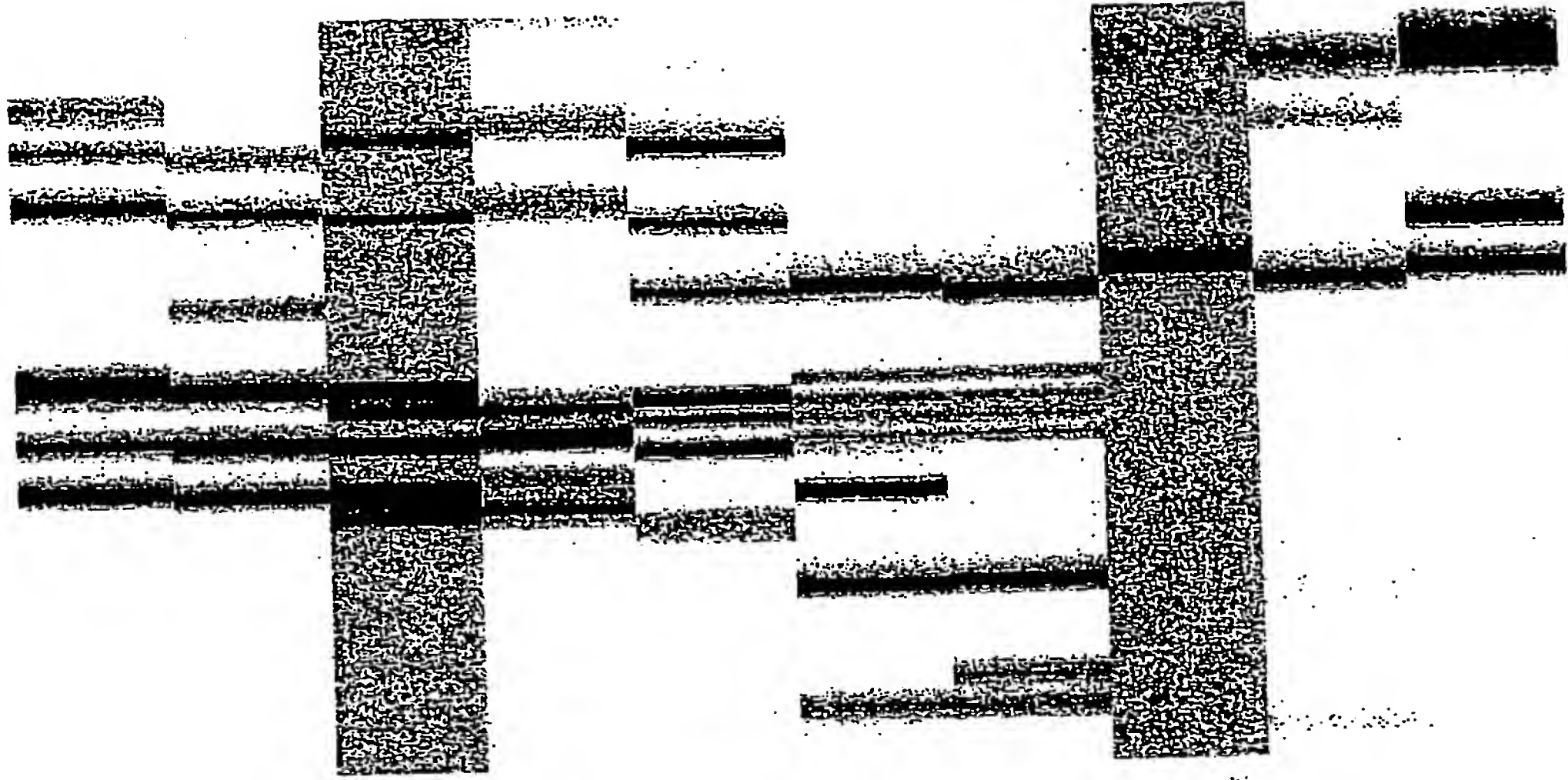
Lactobacillus acidophilus <Unlabeled> <none>

1702 BBB *Lactobacillus acidophilus*

Lactobacillus gasseri <Unlabeled> <none>

Lactobacillus johnsonii <Unlabeled> <none>

RiboPrint (R) Pattern



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Example 11

The fatty acid composition of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 and *Lactobacillus Paracasei* Lbp PB01.

Reference database		Reference database		Test		Test	
Lb. Acidophilus		Lb. Paracasei		Lb. Acidophilus Lba EB01		Lb. Paracasei Lbp PB01	
Fatty acid	Percent	Fatty acid	Percent	Fatty acid	Percent	Fatty acid	Percent
14:0	4,09	14:0	5,25	14:0	9,79	14:0	6,22
16:0	7,91	16:0	16,17	16:0	34,64	16:0	37,32
17:1 w8c	1,24	17:1 w8c	0,6	17:1 w8c	0	17:1 w8c	0
18:1 w9c	63,03	18:1 w9c	44,07	18:1 w9c	32,79	18:1 w9c	37,45
18:1 w7c	6,17	18:1 w7c	13,18	18:1 w7c	0	18:1 w7c	5,56
18:0	0,9	18:0	1,05	18:0	8,17	18:0	7,04
sum in feature 3	5,71	sum in feature 3	9,47	sum in feature 3	0	sum in feature 3	0
sum in feature 5	2,16	sum in feature 5	0,56	sum in feature 5	14,6	sum in feature 5	6,41
sum in feature 7	7,09	sum in feature 7	8,3	sum in feature 7	0	sum in feature 7	0
total %	98,3		98,65		99,99		100

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Example 12

The API of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 and *Lactobacillus Paracasei* Lbp PB01 showing the ability of the strains to ferment different sugars.

Number 1 = *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 (DSM 14869)

Number 2 = *Lactobacillus Paracasei* Lbp PB01 (DSM 14870)

Overall conclusion: Number 1 = *Lactobacillus acidophilus* Lba EB01 (DSM 14869)

The API 50 CHL result gave a very good result with regard to the genus, which was found to be correct (*Lactobacillus spp*), whereas the identification with regard to the species (*L. acidophilus*) is not as certain.

Results:

API50CHL	1. ... ~
Glycerol	Negativ
Erythritol	Negativ
D-Arabinose	Negativ
L-Arabinose	Negativ
Ribose	Negativ
D-Xylose	Negativ
L-Xylose	Negativ
Adonitol	Negativ
β Methyl-D-xylosid	Negativ
Galactose	Positiv
Glucose	Positiv
Fructose	Positiv
Mannose	Negativ
Sorbose	Negativ

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API5OCHL	1.
Rhamnose	Negativ
Dulcitol	Negativ
Inositol	Negativ
Mannitol	Negativ
Sorbitol	Negativ
α Methyl-D-mannosid	Negativ
α Methyl-D-glucosid	Negativ
N Acetyl glucosamin	Negativ
Amygdalin	Negativ
Arbutin	Negativ
Esculin	Positiv
Salicin	Negativ
Cellobiose	Positiv
Maltose	Positiv
Lactose	Negativ
Melibiose	Negativ
Sucrose	Positiv
Trehalose	Negativ
Inulin	Negativ
Melezitose	Negativ
D-Raffinose	Negativ
Stivelse	Negativ
Glycogen	Negativ
Xylitol	Negativ
Gentiobiose	Positiv
D-Turanose	Negativ
D-Lyxose	Negativ
D-Tagatose	Negativ
D-Fucose	Negativ
L-Fucose	Negativ
D-Arabitol	Negativ
L-Arabitol	Negativ
Gluconat	Negativ
2-Keto-gluconat	Negativ
5-Keto-gluconat	Negativ

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Conclusion	ID %	T-value (Complete identity to type strain = 1.00)
<i>Lacto.acidophilus</i>	60,7	0,74
<i>Lacto.delb.delb.</i>	36,5	0,69
<i>Lacto.acidophilus</i>	2,5	0,59

Overall conclusion: Number 2 = *Lactobacillus Paracasei* Lbp PB01 (DSM 14870)

The API 50 CHL result gave a very good result with regard to the genus as well as species, thus it is asserted that the strain is a *Lactobacillus Paracasei subsp. Paracasei*.

API50CHL	2. ~
Glycerol	Negativ
Erythritol	Negativ
D-Arabinose	Negativ
L-Arabinose	Negativ
Ribose	Positiv
D-Xylose	Negativ
L-Xylose	Negativ
Adonitol	Negativ
β Methyl-D-xylosid	Negativ
Galactose	Positiv
Glucose	Positiv
Fructose	Positiv
Mannose	Positiv
Sorbose	Positiv
Rhamnose	Negativ
Dulcitol	Positiv
Inositol	Negativ
Mannitol	Positiv
Sorbitol	Positiv
α Methyl-D-mannosid	Negativ
α Methyl-D-glucosid	Positiv
N Acetyl glucosamin	Positiv
Amygdalin	Positiv

API50CHL	2. ~
Arbutin	Positiv
Esculin	Positiv
Salicin	Positiv
Cellobiose	Positiv
Maltose	Negativ
Lactose	Positiv
Melibiose	Negativ
Sucrose	Negativ
Trehalose	Positiv
Inulin	Negativ
Melezitose	Positiv
D-Raffinose	Negativ
Stivelse	Negativ
Glycogen	Negativ
Xylitol	Negativ
Gentiobiose	Negativ
D-Turanose	Negativ
D-Lyxose	Negativ
D-Tagatose	Positiv
D-Fucose	Negativ
L-Fucose	Negativ
D-Arabitol	Negativ
L-Arabitol	Negativ
Gluconat	Positiv
2-Keto-gluconat	Negativ
5-Keto-gluconat	Negativ
Conclusion	(Complete identity to type strain (complete = 1.00): 0,52
<i>Lacto.para.paracasei</i>	ID% = 97.8

0-1	Form - PCT/RO/134 (EASY) Indications Relating to Deposited Microorganism(s) or Other Biological Material (PCT Rule 13bis)	
0-1-1	Prepared using	PCT-EASY Version 2.92 (updated 01.01.2003)
0-2	International Application No.	
0-3	Applicant's or agent's file reference	P200101852WO
1	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
1-1	page	8
1-2	line	19
1-3	Identification of Deposit	
1-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
1-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
1-3-3	Date of deposit	18 March 2002 (18.03.2002)
1-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ 14869
1-4	Additional Indications	NONE
1-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	all designated States
1-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications These indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	NONE
2	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
2-1	page	8
2-2	line	20
2-3	Identification of Deposit	
2-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
2-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
2-3-3	Date of deposit	18 March 2002 (18.03.2002)
2-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ 14870
2-4	Additional Indications	NONE
2-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	all designated States
2-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications These indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	NONE

3	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
3-1	page	8
3-2	line	23
3-3	Identification of Deposit	
3-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
3-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
3-3-3	Date of deposit	20 March 2003 (20.03.2003)
3-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ
3-4	Additional Indications	
		NONE
3-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	
		all designated States
3-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications	
	These Indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	Accession number of deposit
4	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
4-1	page	8
4-2	line	24
4-3	Identification of Deposit	
4-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
4-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
4-3-3	Date of deposit	20 March 2003 (20.03.2003)
4-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ
4-4	Additional Indications	
		NONE
4-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	
		all designated States
4-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications	
	These indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	Accession number of deposit
5	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
5-1	page	8
5-2	line	24
5-3	Identification of Deposit	
5-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
5-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
5-3-3	Date of deposit	20 March 2003 (20.03.2003)
5-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ

5-4	Additional Indications	NONE
5-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	all designated States
5-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications These indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	Accession number of deposit
6	The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism(s) or other biological material referred to in the description on:	
6-1	page	8
6-2	line	25
6-3	Identification of Deposit	
6-3-1	Name of depositary institution	DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH
6-3-2	Address of depositary institution	Mascheroder Weg 1b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany
6-3-3	Date of deposit	20 March 2003 (20.03.2003)
6-3-4	Accession Number	DSMZ
6-4	Additional Indications	NONE
6-5	Designated States for Which Indications are Made	all designated States
6-6	Separate Furnishing of Indications These indications will be submitted to the International Bureau later	Accession number of deposit

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0-4	This form was received with the international application: (yes or no)	
0-4-1	Authorized officer	

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CLAIMS

1. A probiotic *Lactobacillus* strain selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 (DSM 14869), *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp PB01
5 (*DSM 14870*), *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx EB03, *Lactobacillus strain* Lbxx PB03 and *Lactobacillus* strains with essential the same properties.
2. *Lactobacillus* strain according to claim 1, wherein the strain is *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB01 (DSM 14869) or *Lactobacillus paracasei* strain Lbp
10 PB01 (DSM 14870).
3. *Lactobacillus* strain according to claim 1 for medical use.
- 15 4. A pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier and/or diluent.
- 20 5. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 4 comprising 10^5 to 10^{13} cfu *Lactobacillus* per gram.
6. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 5 comprising 10^6 to 10^{12} cfu *Lactobacillus* per gram.
- 25 7. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 6 in the form of a suspension, spray, gel, cream, powder, capsule, solution for lavages, ovules, a vaginal insert, tablets or a microencapsulated product.
8. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 7 comprising up to about 10 %
30 mucous adhesive excipient.
9. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 8 wherein the mucous adhesive excipient is a hydrocolloid.

10. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 9 wherein the hydrocolloid is selected from the group comprising xanthan gum, locust bean or alginate.
11. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 10 wherein the hydrocolloid is xanthan gum.
12. A vaginal composition according to any one of claims 7 to 11 comprising a substrate.
13. A vaginal composition according to claim 12 wherein the substrate is not fermented by *Candida albicans* or by Gram negative pathogenic bacteria.
14. A vaginal composition according to claim 13, wherein the substrate is an oligosaccharide.
15. A vaginal composition according to claim 14, wherein the substrate is lactitol, and/or oligofructose and/or lactulose.
16. A vaginal composition according to claim 15, wherein the substrate is lactitol.
17. An absorbent product, such as a feminine hygiene diaper, sanitary napkin, impregnated tampon, panty guard or an incontinence guard comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1.
18. An absorbent product according to claim 17 comprising 10^5 to 10^{13} cfu.
19. An absorbent product according to claim 18 comprising 10^6 to 10^{12} cfu.
20. A dairy product comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1.
21. A nutraceutical product comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1.

22. A functional food comprising one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1.
23. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for preparing a pharmaceutical composition for preventing and/or treating vaginal infections
24. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for preparing a pharmaceutical composition for preventing and/or treating gastrointestinal diseases.
25. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for preparing a pharmaceutical composition for preventing and/or treating urinary-tract infections.
26. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for producing an absorbent product, such as a feminine hygiene diaper, sanitary napkin, panty guard or an incontinence guard for preventing and/or treating vaginal infections.
27. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to any one of claims 1 - 15 as a medical device.
28. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for preparing a dairy product for preventing and/or treating gastrointestinal diseases.
29. Use of one or more *Lactobacillus* strains according to claim 1 for preparing functional food for preventing or treating gastrointestinal diseases.
30. Use of said strains according to claim 1 for preparing a nutraceutical for preventing or treating gastrointestinal diseases.
31. A vaginal composition comprising bacterial strains with the ability to colonize the vagina and a substrate.
32. A vaginal composition according to claim 31, wherein the substrate is not fermented by *Candida albicans* or by Gram negative pathogenic bacteria.

33. A vaginal composition according to claim 32, wherein the substrate is an oligosaccharide.

5 34. A vaginal composition according to claim 33, wherein the substrate is lactitol, and/or oligofructose and/or lactulose.

35. A vaginal composition according to claim 34, wherein the substrate is lactitol.

10 36. A vaginal composition according to any of claims 31-35, wherein the bacterial strain is a probiotic *Lactobacillus* strain selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, strain Lba EB01 (DSM 14869), *Lactobacillus paracasei*, strain Lbp PB01 (DSM 14870) *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain with essential the same
15 properties.

37. Use of a substrate, which is not fermented by *Candida albicans* or by Gram negative pathogenic bacteria in the preparation of a vaginal formulation comprising bacteria.

20

38. Use according to claim 37, wherein the substrate is an oligosaccharide.

39. Use according to claim 38, wherein the substrate is lactitol and/or oligofructose and/or lactulose.

25

40. Use according to claim 39, wherein the substrate is lactitol.

41. Use according to any of claims 37 to 40, wherein the strain is a probiotic *Lactobacillus* strain selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, strain Lba EB01 (DSM 14869), *Lactobacillus paracasei*, strain Lbp PB01 (DSM
30 14870), *Lactobacillus acidophilus* strain Lba EB02, *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain Lbpl PB02, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx EB03, *Lactobacillus* strain Lbxx PB03 and *Lactobacillus* strain with essential the same properties.

42. A method for treating or preventing microbial imbalances in mammals comprising administration of an effective amount of a probiotic *Lactobacillus* according to any of claims 1 to 15.

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Figure 1/3

Adherence of probiotic strains to cultured Caco-2 cells

Adherence: % of added bacteria

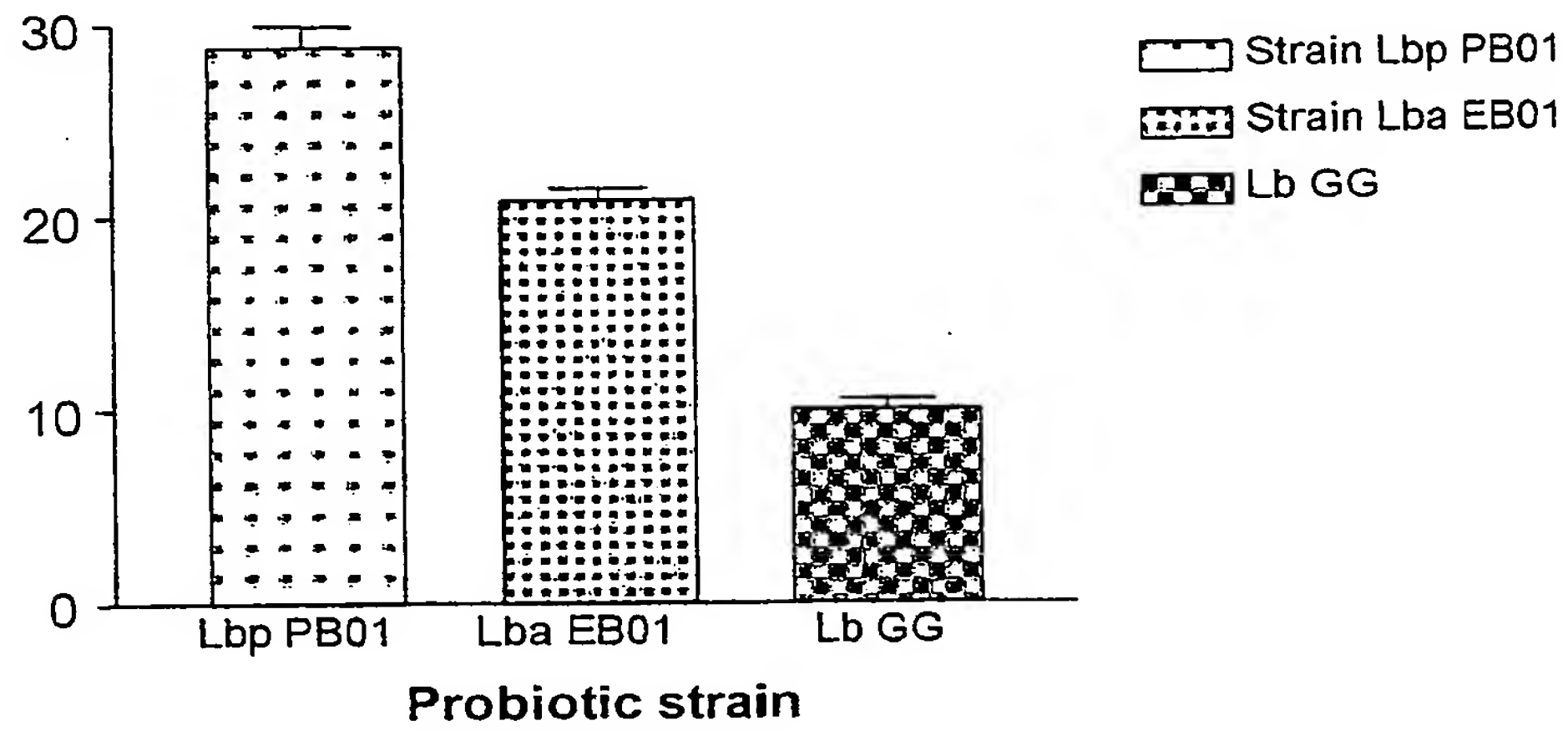


Figure 2/3

2/3

**Adherence of probiotic strains
to isolated vaginal epithelial
Number of bacteria per cells**

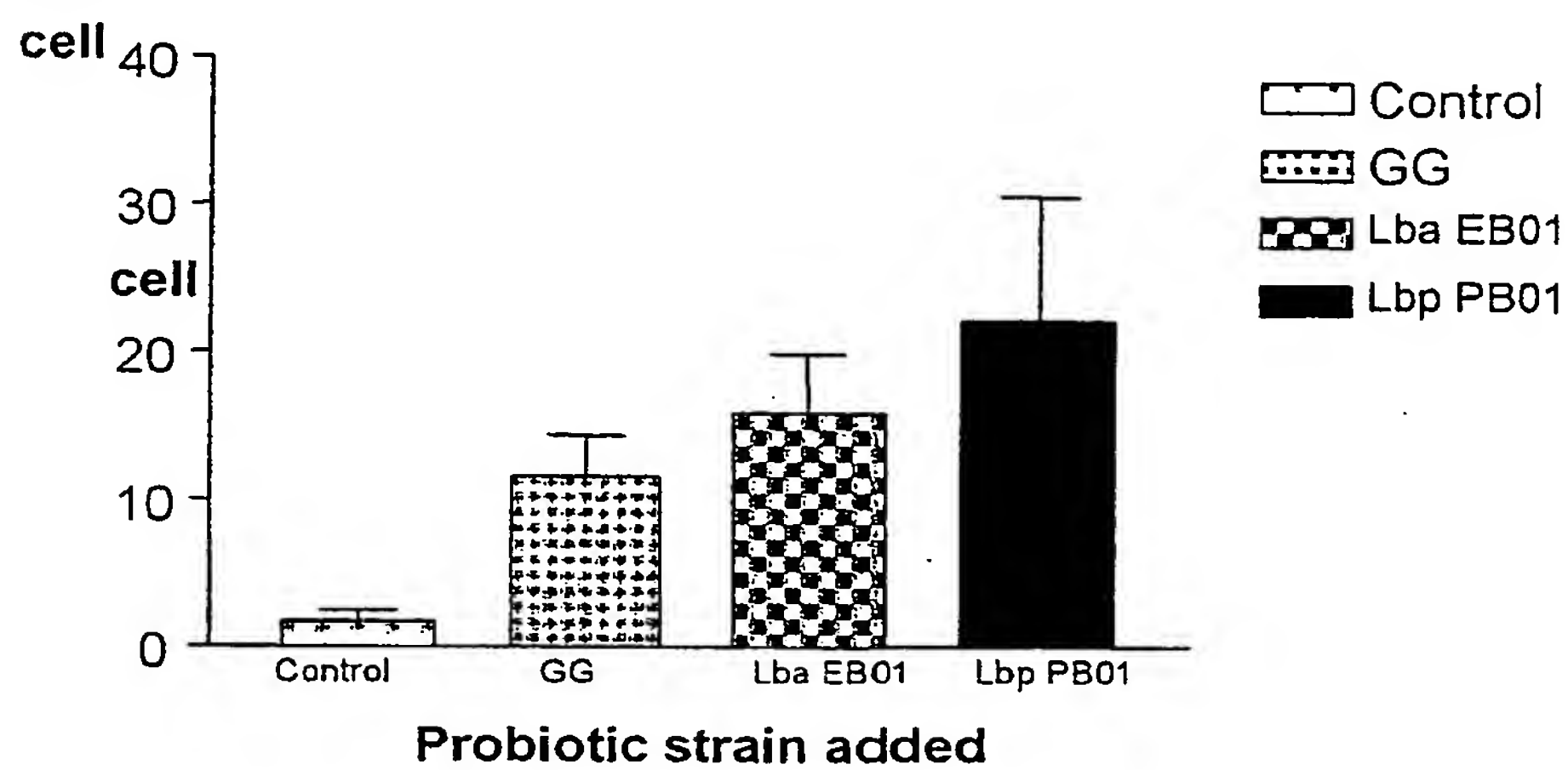
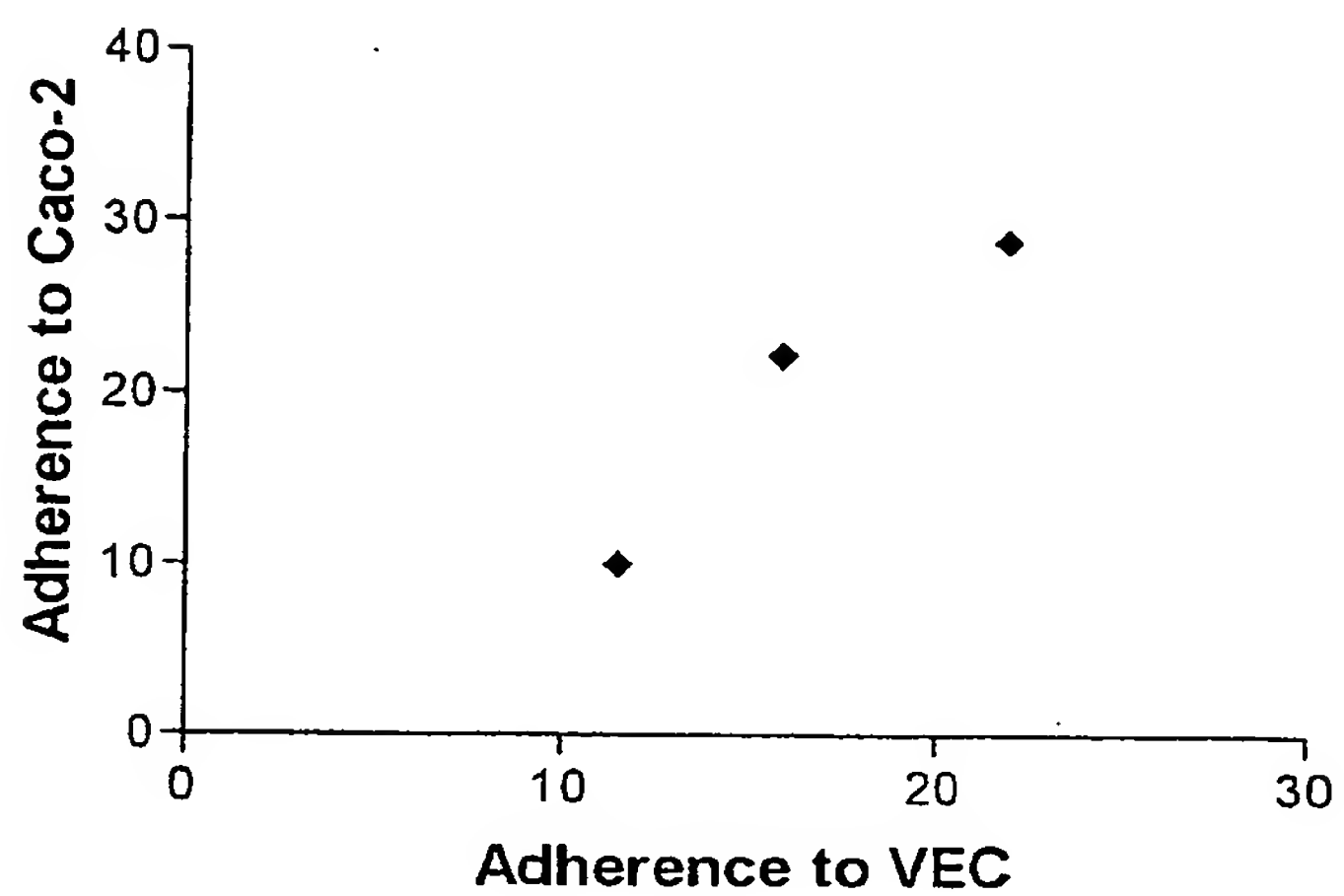


Figure 3/3

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**Correlation between adherence
to vaginal epithelial cells and
Caco-2 cells**



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A. The indications made below relate to the deposited microorganism or other biological material referred to in the description on page <u>8</u> , line <u>23</u>	
B. IDENTIFICATION OF DEPOSIT Further deposits are identified on an additional sheet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Name of depositary institution DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH	
Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) Mascheroder Weg 1 b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany	
Date of deposit 20 March 2003	Accession Number DSM 15525
C. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable) This information is continued on an additional sheet <input type="checkbox"/>	
Lactobacillus acidophilus Lba EB02	
D. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE (if the indications are not for all designated States)	
E. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable)	
The indications listed below will be submitted to the International Bureau later (specify the general nature of the indications e.g., "Accession Number of Deposit")	
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Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) Mascheroder Weg 1 b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany	
Date of deposit 20 March 2003	Accession Number DSM 15524
C. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable) This information is continued on an additional sheet <input type="checkbox"/>	
Lactobacillus plantarum Lbpl PB02	
D. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE (if the indications are not for all designated States)	
E. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable)	
The indications listed below will be submitted to the International Bureau later (specify the general nature of the indications e.g., "Accession Number of Deposit")	

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Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) Mascheroder Weg 1 b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany	
Date of deposit 20 March 2003	Accession Number DSM 15527
C. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable) This information is continued on an additional sheet <input type="checkbox"/>	
Lactobacillus sp Lbxx EB03	
D. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE (if the indications are not for all designated States)	
E. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable)	
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Name of depositary institution DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH	
Address of depositary institution (including postal code and country) Mascheroder Weg 1 b, D-38124 Braunschweig, Germany	
Date of deposit 20 March 2003	Accession Number DSM 15526
C. ADDITIONAL INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable) This information is continued on an additional sheet <input type="checkbox"/>	
Lactobacillus sp Lbxx PB03	
D. DESIGNATED STATES FOR WHICH INDICATIONS ARE MADE (if the indications are not for all designated States)	
E. SEPARATE FURNISHING OF INDICATIONS (leave blank if not applicable)	
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